

CodeNEXT Discussion Topics & Questions

Testing, Compatibility, and Transition Zones

Testing

Testing should be led by staff and consultants with involvement by design and development professionals in a transparent, public process, and results should be published publicly and presented to Council. Staff should make accommodations for further amendments to be approved prior to implementation of the new code if final testing identifies errors or problems.

Testing should occur after each reading of the code text and map if significant amendments have been made by Council and should occur after final adoption but well before implementation of the new code.

Testing should include analysis of the impact of changes to the code text and map on housing capacity, including income restricted housing capacity.

The new code should not be implemented until confirmation that the code works and all training, technology updates, organizational changes, and criteria manuals (etc.) have been finalized.

- Should Council establish a period before the new Land Development Code becomes effective during which city staff will test the code and bring the results to Council for review?
- What testing has occurred to date and how have the results been used and reported?
- What opportunities should be available to involve public stakeholders in the testing process?
- What is the process for map and text amendments during this testing period?
- Should Council establish a time period of at least 6 months after final adoption before the new Land Development code takes effect?
- What process should Council establish for implementation of the code, over what timeframe?

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Compatibility

In order to maximize housing capacity on transportation corridors, compatibility standards and initial mapping should work together in a way that maximizes the amount of potential housing units achievable under proposed base zoning and any applicable Affordable Housing Bonus for properties on transportation corridors, subject to the contextual factors referenced below.

Compatibility standards will be triggered by a Residential House-Scale zoning district of an adjacent property or a property located directly across an alley or narrow neighborhood street (60 feet or less) as proposed in Draft 3.

So as to maximize housing capacity on transportation corridors while minimizing up-zoning of existing single-family zoned properties, the following general mapping guidelines will apply in areas where contextual factors do not apply:

- A deep lot located directly on a transportation corridor shall have the back portion of the lot initially mapped with a zone (RM1 and above) that does not trigger compatibility, and is compatible with any adjacent residential house-scale zones.
- For a shallow lot located directly on a transportation corridor, the lot located directly behind the shallow lot, or across an alley or narrow neighborhood street, shall be initially mapped with a zone (RM1 and above) that does not trigger compatibility, and is compatible with any adjacent residential house-scale zones.
- The above direction for mapping to maximize housing capacity on transportation corridors may not apply where, after Council review of draft mapping during the CodeNEXT process, it is determined that contextual factors make it unnecessary or inappropriate given irregular street grids, topography, localized flooding, gentrification, wildfire risk, and other factors such as the 13 factors identified by the Planning Commission.

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- **Council members will work with the public and staff to identify where the above contextual factors are present and make recommendations on mapping changes prior to final adoption of the zoning map.**
- **The new land development code should require sufficient no-build zones and vegetative buffers between residential and commercial uses so as to minimize the impact of noise and light pollution, deliveries and trash collection, as well as providing ecological services for trees, habitat, and green stormwater controls.**
 - How do transition zones and compatibility affect our Strategic Housing Blueprint housing capacity and other Imagine Austin policy goals?
 - Explain current compatibility standards and the staff recommendation for compatibility standards. What are the planning principles that informed staff's recommendation?
 - Should compatibility standards be used between centers and corridors and residential house-scaled neighborhood cores?
 - How should we minimize the impact of noise and light pollution, deliveries and trash collection in areas of transition?

Transition Zones

Zoning that allows house-scale multi-unit (Missing-Middle) housing should initially be mapped where current zoning or use is roughly equivalent, as well as in areas of transition established between transportation corridors and existing single-family neighborhoods.

In the future, zoning districts that allow for house-scale multi-unit housing should be mapped in additional locations as part of an inclusive, small area planning process.

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- How do transition zones and compatibility affect our Strategic Housing Blueprint housing capacity and other Imagine Austin policy goals?
- Should transition zones be used between centers and corridors and residential house-scaled neighborhood cores?
- What are the different definitions of “transition zone” that have emerged in discussions about Code Next?
- If creating “transition zones” becomes an approved Council goal, how can we create a community-driven process for evaluating and designing those?